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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5881
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY 0104
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RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 8352
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 0071
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 8246
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1974
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9467
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0392
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 0183
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 1093
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SUBJECT: UNHCR DISCUSSES LONG-TERM PLAN TO RESOLVE ROHINGYA REFUGEE SITUATION

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Geeta Pasi; reason 1.4(d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. At a recent meeting, UNHCR and representatives of concerned embassies discussed ways of moving towards a long-term resolution to the Rohingya refugee situation. With a non-political caretaker government in power, the group noted this may be an opportunity to push for a final resolution of the issue. The representatives received an update on the move of the makeshift camp in Teknaf to higher ground. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The Dutch Ambassador convened a meeting of the informal "Rohingya working group" established by the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bangladesh, which included representatives of the embassies of Australia, Canada, the European Commission, France, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, as well as the United Nations country coordinator. POLOFF attended for the United States.

¶3. (C) The UNHCR Country Representative, Pia Pritz-Phiri, mentioned some of the recent improvements in the conditions in the two official Rohingya refugee camps south of Cox's Bazar near the Burmese border, and provided an update on the relocation of a makeshift camp of unregistered Rohingyas in Teknaf to a safer location on higher ground. While these improvements are important, she emphasized the importance of moving towards resolving the 17-year refugee crisis once and for all. She views this period, with a non-political caretaker government, as the ideal opportunity to move the government towards a comprehensive resolution.

¶4. (C) The ambassadors present agreed on the importance of urging the government to resolve the Rohingya situation before national elections scheduled for late 2008. They agreed the European Commission ambassador and UNHCR country representative would meet informally with Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Chowdhury in January to present a proposal for how to move forward, based on existing UNHCR plans. The proposal would include limited resettlement and repatriation, as well as integration into the surrounding communities of the remaining population of the two official refugee camps. This would be combined with an aid package for the area. The ambassadors also agreed to informally coordinate their talking points on the issue for meetings with high-level

government officials.

¶5. (SBU) Post, which meets regularly with representatives of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management on this issue, will continue to monitor the situation closely.
Pasi